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# A Proposal for a 1,000-room Hotel Overlooking the Salt Palace in Downtown Salt Lake City Raises Hope, Eyebrows

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Apr. 7, 2009 - Should Salt Lake County accommodate a new 1,000-room hotel overlooking the Salt Palace -- and lean on taxpayers to help build it?

That's the question the County Council will raise today as officials consider creating an exploratory committee to figure out whether a Salt Palace hotel makes financial sense for Utah's capital and whether public funds should support it.

The hotel would rise within easy walking distance of the Salt Palace, offering convention-bookers 1,000 rooms, about 90,000 square feet of meeting space and full-service accommodations, including fine dining, gift shops, fitness centers and an indoor swimming pool.

It would provide more bed space than the city's largest hotel, Little America, which offers 850 guest rooms four blocks away.

'This is the single most important step we can take as a destination now that we have change in the liquor laws,' said Scott Beck, president and CEO of the Salt Lake Convention & Visitors Bureau. Beginning July 1, bar patrons no longer will be required to purchase a private-club membership.

The proposed hotel's location remains uncertain -- officials may even decide not to pursue the project. However, a recent private-sector marketing study identified three possibilities: A parcel near Japantown on the Salt Palace's west side, another on the southwest corner of 200 West and 200 South and a third across the street from the convention center on West Temple between 100 South and 200 South.

But this question must be answered first: Is the hotel a prudent taxpayer investment?

Councilman Joe Hatch will recommend forming a study group consisting of government appointees, elected officials, tourism promoters and hotel industry representatives to determine the project's practicality. The councilman wants to know whether a convention center hotel really is needed, what effect it might have on courting conventions and what role taxpayers might have to play to get it built.